

VALENTINE DAY PARTIES



St. Valentine's Postman

By WALDON FAWCETT.

A prosaic world is wont to declare that the observance of Valentine Day is suffering rapid decadence, but, as a matter of fact, it is merely that the form of celebration of St. Valentine's festival is undergoing a change. The old-fashioned plan of exchanging sentimental greetings on this special holiday for lovers is, perhaps, passing in so far as grownups are concerned, but only to be supplanted by a new source of merriment, not unlinked with sentiment, namely, the Valentine Day party. Assuredly there is no other occasion during the year that lends itself so readily to the quaint conceits of the hostess ambitious to entertain in a novel way.

The fancy dress or costume party is pre-eminently the favorite on Valentine Day, or, perhaps it might better be said, that St. Valentine's Day is the favorite occasion for these assemblages of fanciful attire. The Valentine fancy dress function may be a card party or a more or less pretentious masked ball, or, perhaps, as is usually the case, just a simple house party, which is, after all, the ideal way of entertaining on this carnival date. As an innovation we have even had of late years the Valentine tea, when the hostess pours the social beverage for her guests at the table liberally adorned with hearts and other significant decorations; but since in this work-a-day world few men can spare even the last fraction of an afternoon, there is at such events a consequent dearth of the sterner sex, without whom no Valentine affair could be a complete success.

The popularity of Valentine Day as an occasion for fancy dress frolics is doubtless due in great measure to the wide range of appropriate costumes suggested by the occasion itself. The guests are sometimes invited to come as "characters of romance," or to personate the famous lovers and sweethearts of history, such as John Alden and Priscilla, Evangeline and Gabriel, Romeo and Juliet, etc. More frequently, however, the costumes are left wholly to the ingenuity of the wearers, and thus we may find among the fair guests cupids, queens of hearts, "modern St. Valentines" in the guise of post-girls and other portrayals equally suggestive of tender sentiment.

The decorations for a Valentine party are obviously an important consideration. Rose color and white should be the predominating hues, and even the lamps and gas jets should be equipped with shades of pink crepe paper or silk in order that they may induce a subdued illumination as is befitting so sentimental an occasion. Although not universally known, mistletoe is almost as appropriate an adjunct on Valentine Day as it is on Christmas. Preferably it should be placed on a chandelier or in a doorway in such manner that it will not be readily noticed save by sharp eyes. Often the mistletoe is intertwined with a bow and arrow or a little plaster cupid.

The invitations for a Valentine party

afford an excellent opportunity for the exercise of ingenuity. In many instances the cards of invitation are adorned with water color representations of hearts or Cupid's bow and arrow and some Valentine hostesses have sent through the mails to their prospective guests heart-shaped pieces of cardboard with the invitation penned on the face of each. The present day fad for the souvenir postal card has also provided another medium for summoning St. Valentine's subjects.

To provide the happiest and most ingenious plans for entertaining her guests is, of course, the chief ambition of every Valentine hostess. The true traditional ceremony of St. Valentine's Day was the drawing of a sort of lottery, followed by ceremonies not unlike what is generally called the game of forfeits, and some modification of this old English pastime is a feature of many present-day Valentine gatherings.

The origin of the time-honored Valentine Day games is veiled in obscurity. It is certain that St. Valentine, who was a martyred Roman priest of the third century, had nothing to do with the matter, yet in old Rome on Valentine's Day the names of the young women were placed in a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. Another observance that has been handed down from time immemorial and is religiously followed by many twentieth century American girls is that of ascertaining fate's decree from still waters. Each young lady writes on bits of paper the names of all the young men of her acquaintance and after all the slips of paper have been rolled in clay they are simultaneously dropped into a tub or tank of water and the first name to rise to the surface is, according to this mysterious verdict, declared to be the lady's Valentine.

Birds are supposed to choose their mates on St. Valentine's Day and ghosts are thought to walk on the night of this day, which latter belief serves as the foundation for the introduction of many weird games in which graceful figures, wrapped in sheets are supposed

to learn, by aid of magic art, the true sentiments of the awed and mystified masculine guests. Sometimes each arriving guest at a Valentine party is met with the salutation "Good morning Valentine." If the person so addressed can repeat this salutation ere the welcomer has finished speaking he must be rewarded by a small present.

A heart contest, after the fashion of a donkey party, is a popular Valentine Day diversion. A large heart is cut out of turkey-red calico and sewed on a sheet. In the center of the heart is fastened a small heart, cut from white calico or other cloth. Each guest is provided with a cardboard arrow with a pin in it. As each one takes his turn he is blindfolded, turned around several times, in order that he may be confused as to locations, and then left to put his arrow in the white heart if he can. He must pin his arrow at the point where he first touches the sheet and is not allowed to feel his way to the goal. After all the guests have tried their skill, a prize is awarded to the one whose arrow is nearest the center of the white heart, while a consolation prize is bestowed upon the poorest marksman.

Target shooting may be made a most enjoyable feature of a Valentine amusement program if the Valentine party is held at a residence where there is a long hall, an attic or other apartment of sufficient size for such archery practice. The targets for this sport are very similar to ordinary targets, save that instead of circles there are hearts, each of a different color, and placed one within another, with gradual reductions in size as the center of the target is approached. The bows and arrows are tied with bits of ribbons of corresponding colors. The young women choose the arrows and the young men select the bows. Partners for the shooting-match are those whose colors are in accord.

The person in charge of this Valentine archery has couplets for each color, which are read on each trial of skill, as the foundation for the introduction of many weird games in which graceful figures, wrapped in sheets are supposed

These couplets include the following:

"If your arrow hits the white,
Watch! Your lover comes tonight."
"If your arrow hits the blue,
The one you love will prove true."
"Wealth and pleasure and yellow gold,
But no true love does this heart hold."
"If your arrow hits the red,
You, I fear, will never wed."
"If your arrow hits the black,
Something good your love doth lack."

At the conclusion of the contest prizes are distributed to the winners and trophies. Heart-shaped boxes of bonbons, heart-shaped match safes and tiny baskets of the familiar candy hearts inscribed with couplets are among the approved forms of reward.

Partners for refreshments may be apportioned by the distribution of pieces of pasteboard hearts, each of different size and shape; the piling off of the guests being in accordance with the matching or mending of the shattered hearts. Or if preferred each guest may be given half a heart and left to discover the identity of the partner fate has assigned him by finding the other half of the quotation written upon his half heart, and which was, of course, penned completely upon the whole heart ere it was severed.

For refreshments are served sandwiches cut heart-shaped, angel food cake, cookies baked in heart-shaped tins and other appropriate delicacies. Presumably there is a fancy cake with pink and white frosting which is announced to contain a ring. Each guest is allowed to cut his or her own slice from this cake and the finder of the ring, it is prophesied, will be the first to be married. Music is almost invariably a feature of the Valentine party and usually the choice falls on love songs such as "Because I Love You So," "Annie Laurie," "Love's Old Sweet Song," and "Coming Through the Rye."

A lately invented pastime for Valentine evening is a "heart hunt." For this quest 200 or 300 tiny hearts are hidden in all parts of the room where the hunt is to be held, some of the hearts being broken and the parts concealed in different places. The hunt continues for a specified length of time and at the expiration of this interval prizes are awarded to the guests who have cap-



The Queen of Hearts

The Point Where

Love Should Halt.

There are few of us who do not admire and applaud the girl who is constant and true—no matter what the circumstances may be—to the man who wins her heart's affections. We delight to read the stories of poets and romancers, which tell of a girl's constancy—how by remaining true to her "Prince Charming," she helped to overcome all obstacles to their union, and perhaps won back her lover's affections when he was inclined to desert her for the charms and fascinations of another girl. And should we become acquainted with such a girl in real life we hold up her constancy as an example for all members of her sex to follow.

It may sound rank heresy to say so, but it is the greatest pity in the world that constancy of this character is so extolled. Not that the girl who refuses to be shaken in her allegiance to the man she loves, and ultimately leads him to a happy life by his own goodness, is undeserving of admiration and praise. The fault lies in the fact that by holding up such a case as an example, we are ample to their sex many girls get exaggerated notions and ideas as to how far constancy should be practiced in love affairs.

The result is that they are very often foolishly constant. They do not temper their love with common sense. The reader may smile, and say that we are blind and outst common sense from the average girl's mind. But in many cases this is only because she possesses false, romantic and sentimental ideas as to what a girl's duty is to the man she loves.

Many a girl has ruined her life's happiness by remaining true to a man quite unworthy of her affection, through a mistaken sense of duty. Then, again, there are girls who have betrothed themselves to a man, persist in marrying him, although they are fully aware that, to a certain extent, their affections have been alienated from him by another man. Such an act cannot possibly be regarded as constancy, although some girls may think it is the embodiment of that virtue. Rather is it the duty of the girl under such circumstances to break her promise and pledge, a knowing, as you do, that every word of your solemn vow is perjury, is wrong, and a good girl should not even permit herself to contemplate such a step.

It is also the greatest of mistakes, in the majority of cases, for a girl to remain constant to a man who, by his behavior, forfeits her love.

Some men are contemptible and cowardly enough to take advantage of a woman's love by threatening to ruin or kill themselves if she gives them up. A girl must know that a man who would utter such a despicable threat is an unworthy specimen of his sex, deserving no one's pity or compassion.

And there is the girl who remains constant to a man who has no reasonable prospect of marrying for many years to come. Her position is extremely unfortunate, and it is most difficult to advise her as to the limit to which her constancy should go. If a girl in such a position feels that she could not possibly love any other man and, in fact,



A Valentine Hostess

tured the greatest number of the elusive emblems of the day. Card parties on St. Valentine's night are usually announced by invitations which proclaim that "Hearts will be Trumps," and the guests may be met at the door by a postman who presents to each arrival an envelope which is found to contain a heart-shaped program—white for the women and red for the men. For the benefit of persons arrang-

ing Valentine parties there may be appended the supposed significance of several of the emblems extensively used on such occasions: An arrow, a wounded heart; a dove, a meek spouse; Cupid, too many lovers; hymeneal torch, thrice married; altar, you will wed your choice; pierced hearts, a broken engagement; and clasped hands, you will wed this year.

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no other member of the opposite sex has any attractions for her, there is nothing to be said against her remaining constant and true to the man she really loves. Nothing is to be gained by marrying a man for a home alone, and a girl had far better remain single and true to the man who will work if she will wait, rather than marry a man she does not really love, but who can shorten the period of waiting.